

Letters

Services' chevrons confusing

As military operations become more and more joint, we in the Army find ourselves frequently interacting with NCOs and enlisted troops from other services. All services have certain differences – not just the way we do things, but also in the way we look. This could cause confusion in critical situations. I would like to suggest [some ways] to reduce that confusion. NCOs of the Army, Marine Corps and Air Force should all wear the same pattern of chevrons and should wear them in the same place on their uniforms.

I would propose that all three services use a pattern of chevrons based on ours, with three arched chevrons above and a maximum of three rockers below those. Under my proposal, each service would keep details that would provide their insignia some uniqueness. The Marine Corps, for example, could keep its crossed rifle pattern. And the chevrons of each service would be of a different color on the dress uniforms – gold for the Army, scarlet for the Marine Corps and white for the Air Force.

The other part of my plan would require all NCOs in these three services to wear their chevrons in the same place on their uniforms. Collar or sleeve does not matter as long as it is the same for every service.

With this proposal, Soldiers would be able to read the ranks of airmen and Marines at a glance, rather than trying to puzzle it out and remember what five chevrons means on the Air Force uniform, and what three up and four down means on a Marine's uniform. This would make working with NCOs from the other services easier on joint operations. We already have plenty of means of telling each other apart – the Marines' digital camouflage, the Air Force's use of blue rather than black on its insignia, our berets, and, of course, the service patches we all share in common.

Precedents exist for my proposal. The insignia of officers is the same for all three services. And I believe our fellow service personnel in the British Army, the Royal Air Force and Royal Marines do something similar to what I propose – all wear the same pattern of chevron.

*Staff Sgt. Dennis Coslett
St. Paul, Minn.*

The right idea on rank

I heartily agree with the idea of new rank insignia design that was proposed in the "Letters" portion of your April 2003 edition. I have thought in the past that a revamping was in order and this sounds like just the ticket. I am just a solitary sergeant, but I feel I am not alone in saying this is an issue that has past its due. I would like to see what the opinions of others around the

Army are in relation to this, and if the stigmas of tradition and complacency can be placed aside for progress and improvement.

Everyone keeps telling me how this is a new Army with a new philosophy and a more cutting edge approach to everything. Some days I question how that could possibly be true when I see how everyone holds on so tightly to the outdated and the obsolete. If Soldiers, especially NCOs, could get behind this and affect a change in the rank we wear on our collars I think it would help put a totally new look on the face of the Army today.

I could comment on the officer rank insignia, but I'll withhold my critiques for a time better suited to fighting that battle. Us enlisted folks have enough work to do in our own house.

Sgt. Maj. Osvaldo Vasquez was just about to expound on a topic that interests me, but opted not to as it would have been "another article."

Could the *Journal* get him to favor the NCO community [with] some further discussion on the "NCO" vs. "Sergeant" debate?

*Sgt. Matthew Gregory
1110th Signal Battalion*

Suggestions seem extreme

I am writing in response to the letter in the April 2003 issue of the *NCO Journal* from Sgt. Maj. Osvaldo Vasquez. While I agree that the Army rank structure could use some minor change, Sgt. Maj. Vasquez's recommendations seem a little extreme in my opinion. The over-abundance of chevrons and arcs in a revised rank structure would be just as confusing as the 1950s-era specialists/NCO structure.

Traditionally, the entry-level enlisted grade in all services has been devoid of rank insignia. Since few are in the E1 pay grade for more than a few months, I see no problem with there being no rank insignia for this grade. Drawing on my prior service in the Marine Corps (I have been with the Missouri Army National Guard for nearly 10 years), I believe the Army should eliminate the rank and insignia of specialist (E4). By the time a Soldier reaches the grade of E4, [he] should be able to lead other Soldiers if necessary. If they are not mentally and physically at that level, perhaps they aren't ready for the greater pay and responsibility that go along with the grade. Therefore, all E4s should be corporals.

Borrowing a concept from both our Marines and the British Army, I wouldn't mind seeing our Army utilize the rank of lance corporal. The Army currently has three ranks of privates. Wouldn't it be a better motivator for a young Soldier to move from E2 to E3 and no longer be a private? The current rank insignia could remain the same with only the title being changed. I have no problem with the chevron/arc Private 1st Class insignia.

The other change I would propose would be to eliminate the term “junior NCO.” It has always sounded peculiar and somewhat childish to me. It would sound much better to have either NCOs or senior NCOs (Staff NCOs). The structure I envision would be: Private (E1), Private First Class (E2), Lance Corporal (E3); Corporal (E4); Sergeant (E5); Staff Sergeant (E6); Sergeant First Class (E7); Master Sergeant./First Sergeant (E8); Segreant Major/Command Segreant Major (E9). As stated previously, the insignia would remain unchanged with the exception of dropping that of specialist.

My final comment is that if we no longer refer to our NCOs as such because of the “non” in noncommissioned, then you also eliminate the “officer” and along with it, some of the basis for an NCO’s authority as a leader of Soldiers.

*Staff Sgt. Jeffrey L. Howard
Missouri Army National Guard
Moberly, Mo.*

Eliminate specialist rank

I found it interesting that Sgt. Maj. Vasquez recommended changing the rank structure. During my tour in Germany from 1988-92, I submitted a suggestion through the suggestion program (which was returned because it had no monetary value) that the rank of specialist be eliminated and that they adopt the rank of corporal first class - two stripes and one rocker to indicate the NCO between corporal and corporal first class. Unlike Sgt. Maj. Vasquez’s suggestion, this change would be less dramatic (not having to learn an entire new rank structure) and elimination of the current specialist rank would bring all the ranks to a more standardized and symmetrical look.

*Staff Sgt. Marilyn Crombie
Personnel Sergeant
Des Moines Recruiting Battalion, Iowa*

What makes an NCO?

There are many Soldiers that don’t really know the difference between a sergeant and a noncommissioned officer. Although it might sound like these are one and the same, there is a difference. Sergeant is a word defining rank. As you well know, this title might come along with time in service or promotion points. Sure, a Soldier might have to go before a promotion board or even attend [the] Primary Leadership Development Course, but one can still do the bare minimum and achieve this much. It takes more to be a true NCO.

First and foremost, an NCO is a leader of Soldiers. This doesn’t necessarily mean that this individual has Soldiers who fall under him/her or is in charge of a certain operation, section or detail. A true NCO knows his/her Soldiers and will ALWAYS put the Soldiers’ needs before his or her own. The NCO Creed starts off with the statement “No one is more professional than I.” To be an NCO is to constantly be in the spotlight. You’re truly being watched from all angles. From the wear of the uniform, to military customs and courtesies, to technical knowledge in a given field, junior enlisted all around are watching, listening and looking at the NCOs for guidance. No

one else can do this. It’s up to the true NCOs to step up their game and lead the way.

Second, an NCO strives to remain tactically and technically proficient. This means that although the individual might have taken an administrative role that comes with the rank, his or her Soldiers should still be able to look up to that leader for ways to improve the way the Soldier gets the job done. This goes back to constantly being in the spotlight. It is the NCO’s responsibility as the leader to stay proficient and up to date in his or her line of work.

Finally, all Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership. This is not requested. It’s demanded. Not just demanded by lower enlisted Soldiers throughout the United States Army, but also by other NCOs that serve along with you. There’s only one type of Soldier that can proudly say that he or she is a member of a time-honored corps. It’s not the commissioned officer or even the sergeant. Only the noncommissioned officer is known as “The Backbone of the Army.”

*Sgt. Rafael A. Caceres III
427th Medical Logistics Battalion, Uzbekistan
U.S. Army Reserve*

Ralston’s Tao of Combat Leadership

Since I was young, I have been a student of history, military history in particular. From reading about battles past and the commanders who led them, I have noted certain points of combat leadership.

❑ Personal responsibility – If you are the one in charge, then you are the one responsible. This is true from generals to privates. Those that do not want responsibility are in the wrong profession.

❑ Study history – History, new and old, continues to play a major role in military decisions, at least it should. The key to everyone (every country, culture, etc.) has been – and always will be – history. History provides trends, tactics, customs, schools of thought, etc. Not only the enemies, but also *our* history is important. There is no sense in paying for the same lessons twice.

❑ Warriorship – Warriorship is actually a simple attribute that few possess and even fewer understand. It is simply the act of executing the personal discipline to accomplish the mission and to be prepared for any mission, no matter when it comes. That means exercising while others sleep in, studying while others play; it is the difference between influencing the world around you [or] letting the world control you.

Warriorship is not a nine-to-five job; it is a way of life. Empower your troops as warriors. A warrior soul, coupled with a superbly conditioned body and a sharp, analyzing mind, is what wins wars.

❑ Training – Training must be hard and realistic. Hard training sucks, but it saves lives. Battle drills must be run like clockwork, and every Soldier must know [his] job. Be satisfied when the troops’ potential meets their actions. Training helps the troops’ confidence, cohesion and morale. By setting high standards, troops will meet those standards and be better prepared mentally as well as physically to fight.

❑ Major points about leadership itself – Leaders must lead by example and go first. One other main point is to trust your leaders. Troops must be cross trained in one another's jobs and be ready to step up and take the leader's job. This is a necessity due to the reality of combat. If you have done this, then not to trust your leaders to do their jobs, is in reality not trusting yourself.

(Editor's note: Spc. Sean F. Ralston is assigned to the 10th Mountain Division. He is currently deployed in Afghanistan.)

APFT photo prompts question

The *NCO Journal* is a tremendous asset to the NCO Corps and I encourage my junior Soldiers to read it in preparation for the day they join the NCO ranks.

I have a concern. In the photo on page 17, Sgt. 1st Class Thorpe appears to have his knee on the back of his hand while assisting Staff Sgt. Albino to perform sit-ups. FM 21-20 specifically states, "Another person will hold your ankles with the hands only. No other method of bracing or holding the feet is authorized." Realizing this article is for demonstrative purposes and the photo may not be of an actual APFT event for score, we should only show our Soldiers the correct way to perform a task. Is Sgt. 1st Class Thorpe bracing his hands? If so, has FM 21 - 20 been changed?

Sgt. Maj. Keith S. Henderson
Personnel Division
Missouri Air National Guard

(Editor's note: In the photograph, Sgt. 1st Class Thorpe's knee is not resting on his hands. We made sure of that before we ran the photo. FM 21-20 has not changed.)

Clarifying the APFT article

I read with interest your article about maximizing your Physical Training. I have a question about the article. Do you do three sets of all the exercises for the sit-ups and push-ups and what is the writing under the +17, 18 and 19 columns in the running chart. I want to share this article with my Soldiers at our next drill.

2nd Lt. Kristine Quilici
U.S. Army Reserve

(Editor's note: According to the article you do three sets of sit-ups and push-ups with one-minute rests between each set for the regular sit-ups and push-ups only. As for the information under the +17, 18 and 19 columns, we refer you to our online edition at <http://usasma.bliss.army.mil/journal> for a better/enlarged viewing.)

Thanks for "Sgt. Daddy"

I was up getting a new retirement ID card and picked up a copy of the *NCO Journal*. I would love to get one every month, but didn't think that you would send a hard copy to everyone free. But I [noticed I] can get it free by looking online.

I [recently] went online and found a [Fall 2002] copy [which] had a copy of "SGT Daddy" that I could download and print.

I printed it out and put it on my cube's wall. Thank you.
Allen Heskett
Application Engineer
Michigan

(Editor's note: Individual subscriptions to the NCO Journal are available through the Government Printing Office at the annual cost of \$16 for domestic and Army Post Office addresses or \$22.40 for delivery to foreign addresses. The subscription price covers four issues annually. The subscription program is open to all individuals and non-government organizations. Individual copies are also available for \$5 domestic or \$7 foreign.

If ordering by mail, send a letter requesting a subscription to the NCO Journal and include a check or money order payable to: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, DC 20402.

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Any unit with a publications account can update their 12 series to request the NCO Journal using the same procedure they use to request all other publications. They can update their 12 series at the <http://www.usapa.army.mil> Web site. The IDN for the NCO Journal is 050041.)

Kudos to the Journal

Keep up the great job. The *NCO Journal* is one of the most informative military publications in the system today. We look forward to every outstanding edition.

Sgt. Maj. Ulysses W Mays
24th Infantry Division (M)
The Warriors at Fort Riley, Kan.

Journal continues to improve

Thank you so much for sending the *NCO Journal* copies. I will again share them with my contacts in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Nevada. Your *Journal* continues to improve and the articles are helpful and interesting.

Sergeant Major of the Army (Ret.) William Wooldridge
1st Sergeant Major of the Army

Journal seeks your input

The *NCO Journal* welcomes your thoughts and encourages you to write to: The NCO Journal, 11291 SGT E Churchill Street, Fort Bliss, Texas, 79918-8002 or e-mail us at ATSS-SJ-NCOJOURNAL@bliss.army.mil.



Reflecting on our past and looking toward the future

With this issue of the *Journal* we welcome a new year and bid farewell to our 12th Sergeant Major of the Army. Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley has certainly represented the enlisted Soldiers and the NCO Corps well. He seems to have an unlimited supply of energy that he's used to improve pay, benefits, education and a multitude of other areas for Soldiers. His travel schedule alone would wear me down in no time. Despite this, every time I've seen SMA Tilley, he's upbeat, positive and willing to listen to Soldiers. All of this and he still has the energy to knock out one-armed push-ups. Read more about SMA Tilley on pages 6-9.

It seems that January is a natural time for reflecting on the past and looking to the future. Part of that reflection is paying tribute to our fallen comrades. As we did in the October 2003 issue, we have included the "Roll Call of the Fallen," a list of all of the Soldiers from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom who died defending our country and way of life. In October's issue, we ran the list of those who died from the start of the operations through Sept. 17, 2003. Despite our strong hopes that the January Roll Call would be much shorter, we still have many names on that list. Our intent with running the Roll Call is a small memorial to help us remember those who lost their lives. We should also keep in our thoughts and prayers those who are currently deployed or preparing to deploy.

In the past few months, we've received several letters and e-mails from readers who share their opinions on different topics or offer suggestions for future stories. We may not have the opportunity to respond to all of your letters, but we do read them and consider your suggestions. Several readers suggested that we print an article on preparing for retirement. The *Journal's* managing editor, Dave Crozier who is a retired Air Force NCO, has written a comprehensive article to assist those who are about

to hang up their boots. Knowing firsthand what it's like to go through the retirement process, he used his experiences to write the in-depth article that should set any Soldier on the right track to prepare for retirement. Check out his article on pages 22-25.

With this issue, we've also started a new feature: "Photo Journal," a photo gallery, capturing what NCOs around the Army are doing. Since "Photo Journal" will be a regular feature in each issue of the magazine, we're putting out the call to all photographers. Whether you consider yourself an amateur or a professional, we encourage you to send us your photos. The only guidelines for photo entries is that the photo must demonstrate an NCO or NCOs doing their duties, be it accomplishing a mission, training or taking care of Soldiers. We will print your best photos in each issue. The winning photographers will receive a certificate acknowledging their photographic excellence. Please remember to send caption information and the photographer's name, rank and unit so we can give the photographer credit. Our e-mail and mailing addresses are both listed on the inside cover the magazine.

In addition to photographs, remember we always gladly accept your articles, letters and suggestions. In the case of articles, keep in mind that we are looking for "news you can use." In other words, articles that will help our readers succeed in some aspect of their missions. Our new expanded Web site, <http://usasma.bliss.army.mil/journal> offers readers easy access to all of our back issues and an e-mail link. Please keep in mind that we count on your input and support to keep the *NCO Journal* on track with NCOs' concerns. We look forward to reading your letters. And remember, this is your *Journal*.

Master Sgt. Lisa Hunter
Editor in Chief